Containment of inflation remains high on the agenda of the Government. Anti-inflationary policies of the Government include strict fiscal and monetary discipline, rationalization of excise and import duties of essential items so that there is no undue burden on the poor, effective supply-demand management of essential commodities through liberal tariff and trade policies, and strengthening the public distribution system.

Donation racket in medical/engineering colleges

329. DR. E.M. SUDARSANA NATCHIAPPAN: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether his Ministry is aware of donation racket throughout the country in private engineering and medical colleges in the name of donation for studies; and

(b) if so, how much revenue is generated through them by Taxation either in State or in Union Budget?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI S.S. PALANIMANICKAM): (a) and (b) Inquires carried out by the Income Tax Department indicate that donations have been paid for securing admission to private Medical/Engineering colleges. The income embedded in such transactions is charged to tax in accordance with provisions of the Income Tax Act, 1961. Data in respect of taxes paid/payable in respect of such donations is not centrally maintained.

Backlog vacancies for SCs/STs

330. SHRI PRAVEEN RASHTRAPAL: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) the number of backlog vacancies for SC and ST as on 1st April, 2004 in the LIC and four General Insurance Corporations (Oriental, United etc.) all over the country, region-wise;

(b) whether special recruitments were done to fill up these vacancies;

(c) if so, the details thereof, region-wise; and

(d) what is the position/status of backlog vacancies as on 31st March, 2007 region-wise?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI PAWAN KUMAR BANSAL): (a) to (d) The Information is being collected and will be laid on the Table of the House.

Search operations by Income Tax Department

331. SHRI PRAVEEN RASHTRAPAL: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) the number of search operations carried out by the intelligence wings of the Income Tax Department during the period from 1st April, 2006 to 28th February, 2007 alongwith details for the States of West Bengal, Tamil Nadu, Uttar Pradesh, Maharashtra and Gujarat;

(b) whether it is a fact that the actions of searches are always taken in the closing month of financial year; and

(c) if so, the details of cash, ornaments and jewellery seized and actual gain to the revenue on accounts of payment of tax-advance tax subsequent to the search?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI S.S. PALANIMANICKAM): (a) The total number of search operations carried out by the Intelligence Wings of the IT Department during the period from 1st April, 2006 to 28th February, 2007 are 453 group of cases. The search operations carried out in the States of West Bengal, Tamil Nadu, Uttar Pradesh, Maharashtra and Gujarat are 18,53,10, 126 and 47 group of cases respectively.

(b) No, Sir. The observation that the actions of searches are always conducted in the closing month of the Financial Year is not correct as searches are conducted throughout the year.

(c) Not applicable in view of reply at (b) above.

Growth rate of economy

332. SHRIMATI N.P. DURGA: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that India has become a US $1.1 trillion economy and thereby become one of the 11 powerhouses that enjoy this distinction;

(b) how could it be possible within a span of 5 years taking into consideration that India's GDP in 2000-01 was below US $ 500 billion; and

(c) to what extent the strong rupee helped India to become a trillion economy?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI PAWAN KUMAR BANSAL): (a) to (c) As per the Revised Estimates released by the Central Statistical Organisation (CSO) the Gross Domestic Product of India at current market prices for the year, 2006-07 was Rs. 41,25,725 crore. This is equivalent to US Dollar 912 billion at an average exchange rate of Rs. 45.25 per US Dollar for 2006-07. In 2000-01 the GDP at current rnarket prices was Rs. 21,02,376 crore equivalent to US Dollar 460 billion at the average exchange rate of Rs. 45.68 per US Dollar in 2000-01. The GDP at current market prices in US dollar terms grew at a compound annual rate of 12.1 per cent during this period.

Appreciation of Rupee

333. SHRI SYED AZEEZ PASHA: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the rupee has appreciated by over 6 per cent during the year, 2006-07 which has hit the growth of exports and economy;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether a Government panel was set up to discuss the impact of the appreciation of Indian rupee on the economy and suggest measures to tackle it; and